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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2029  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [AR](#)  
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE PRESIDENT CFK CALMLY SPINS ADVERSE  
ELECTION RESULTS; OPPOSITION DEMURS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 0750

Classified By: CDA Tom Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

11. (C) Summary and introduction: Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) addressed the nation June 29 via live television to put the previous day's election results in perspective. She sought to put the best possible face on the electoral results, noting it was not unusual for governments to suffer setbacks in legislative mid-term elections after six years in power and arguing that pro-government candidates won a greater share of the national vote than any other political force. Starting off in a somber tone but gradually warming up and ending with smiles, CFK said she was not planning any cabinet changes. Opposition candidates and political commentators panned her remarks, saying that it showed CFK's lack of feel for the Argentine electorate. For our part, we found CFK's calm, dispassionate demeanor at the press conference a reassuring sign that the GoA is taking the adverse electoral results in stride, at least for now. End summary.

#### The Results According to Cristina

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12. (U) In a rare press conference televised live June 29, CFK sought to put a positive spin on the previous day's election results (reftel). She opened by stressing that the elections had been orderly and transparent, despite allegations beforehand by the opposition that the government would orchestrate widespread fraud. CFK congratulated everyone who had participated in the elections, and "all of the victors."

13. (C) Although CFK acknowledged that the results in Buenos Aires province (where her husband had led the Victory Front's slate of candidates) had not been in the government's favor, she pointed out that pro-government forces had won in 14 provinces, and that nationwide FpV-aligned groups won 31.03%, more than any other political force. CFK said three major blocs had emerged ("European-style"). She described the bloc that had come in second place with a combined total of 29% of the national vote as a loose alliance of the Civic Coalition, the Radical Party (UCR), the Socialists, "Cobismo" (followers of VP Cobos), and "Juecismo" (followers of former Cordoba mayor Luis Juez, who won his senatorial bid). She noted the center-right PRO party (which won in Buenos Aires province and city) had 18.5% of the national vote, followed by several smaller groupings.

14. (C) CFK asserted that before the election she had a

majority in the Senate, with 37 out of 72 seats, but not in the Chamber of Deputies, where she had 155 (number must be wrong; 155 is more than half of 257) out of 257 seats and therefore relied on the support of another 22 allies to pass legislation or muster quorum. As a result of the June 28 elections, she expected to have 35 seats in the Senate plus the support of another four allies, giving her a working majority. And in the Chamber, she expected to have 107 seats plus the support of another 27 allies. She said she looked forward to working with the legislative branch, noting that congressional approval adds legitimacy to executive branch initiatives. She acknowledged the need to negotiate to reach agreements, and later, in response to a question, pointed out that negotiations do not require parties to sacrifice principles.

15. (C) In response to a question about whether the June 28 results should be interpreted as a 14-point decline in public support for the government since the 2007 elections, CFK noted it was not unusual for governments to suffer setbacks in legislative mid-term elections after six years in power. She pointed out that even in Buenos Aires province, her husband's slate garnered a greater percentage (32.11%) than did Mayor Macri's slate headed by Gabriela Michetti (31.09%) in Buenos Aires city. Media had portrayed Michetti as a winner, even though her 31% indicated a much sharper, quicker drop in public support, since Macri-Michetti had won the city government with 60% two years earlier (in the second round; in the first round in 2007, Macri won 45% of the vote). CFK also dismissed the idea that the election represented a turn to the right, praising the effective campaign of independent leftist candidate Pino Solanas, who took second in Buenos

Aires city with a late surge in support.

CFK: No More Cabinet Changes  
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16. (U) In response to a question about cabinet changes, CFK noted that her cabinet chief had announced earlier that day the replacement of Health Minister Graciela Ocana by Tucuman Lt. Governor Juan Luis Manzur, but that she did not foresee any other immediate personnel moves. Her husband, former president Nestor Kirchner, had announced earlier in the day his resignation as president of the Peronist Party (PJ), requesting that PJ vice president Daniel Scioli, the governor of Buenos Aires province who ran with Kirchner in the June 28 election, be allowed to take over as PJ leader. Scioli, in turn, announced he will not take the seat he won in Congress, but will continue to serve as governor. In what may presage an attempt to develop a more independent image, Nestor Kirchner's erstwhile running mate in Sunday's election characterized the move as "my own decision," and said that he had already reached out to several opposition figures, including Macri, Elisa Carrio, and Francisco de Narvaez.

Opposition Criticizes CFK  
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17. (SBU) Opposition leaders criticized CFK's attempt to downplay the government's defeat in the June 28 elections, questioning what they saw as her refusal to acknowledge the scale of the government's defeat and her failure to contemplate any responsibility for the vote or brook any criticism. Francisco de Narvaez, leader of the Union-PRO slate that came in first ahead of Nestor Kirchner's slate in Buenos Aires, said, "The government is autistic, removed from reality." Elisa Carrio, head of the Civic and Social Accord that includes her Civic Coalition, said CFK had created "an abyss" between herself and the people, and predicted that if this "abyss" got any deeper, there would be "a very serious crisis of governability." Leftist filmmaker Pino Solanas, whose ticket came in second in the city of Buenos Aires, expressed discomfort with CFK's praise for him, denied any possibility of an alliance with the government, and accused CFK of "adulterating reality."

18. (SBU) Vice President Cobos, returning to the capital from

Mendoza, where his allies scored a major victory, said he was willing to work with CFK to negotiate and build congressional consensus to approve difficult legislation, such as the budget or renewal of the Economic Emergency Law. In response to CFK's criticism of him for his "unprecedented" role as a vice president putting together a slate of opposition candidates, Cobos said it was also "unprecedented" for a vice president to be mistreated the way he had been by CFK and her husband.

Comment

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19. (C) The opposition is certainly right to characterize CFK's post-election analysis as a tendentious attempt to put the best possible face on what was a clear, devastating defeat. At the same time, CFK is hardly the only politician, in Argentina or anywhere else for that matter, to try to spin bad political news. From our perspective, the biggest news from the press conference was that CFK had her act together, and seemed to take the election result in stride. Starting off in a somber tone but gradually warming up and ending with smiles, CFK made a reasonable case for still being politically relevant. While her husband and she are undoubtedly still processing the election's meaning, CFK's performance at the press conference suggests that, at least in the short term, the Kirchners will not react to the electorate's harsh verdict by intensifying Argentina's deep political divisions.

KELLY